

Central Waterfront: Planning for the Future

2003 Public Forum
Summary



City of Seattle



Joint Report by
Seattle Design Commission
Seattle Planning Commission

JOINT COMMISSION REPORT

About the Sponsors

*The fifteen member **Seattle Planning Commission**, established in the early 1900's and chartered in 1946, advises the Mayor, City Council and City departments on broad goals, policies and plans for the physical development of the City. Its work is framed by the Comprehensive Plan and its vision for Seattle into the 21st Century, The Commission is committed to engaging citizens in the work of planning for and working to reach these goals.*



John Owen, Chair of the Seattle Planning Commission offered a synopsis of the themes that emerged at the first two waterfront forums



David Spiker, Chair of the Design Commission welcomes participants to Waterfront Forum #2 on November 7, 2003

*The nine member **Seattle Design Commission** was established in 1968 and is a nonpartisan, advisory body to the Mayor, City Council, and City departments. It works to ensure that public facilities and projects within the civic environment incorporate high standards of design quality and efficiency. Broadly, the Design Commission reviews projects funded in any part with City money and/or those on City land and makes recommendations as the projects evolve and develop.*

Agency Co-Sponsors

***City of Seattle** – The Mayor's Office, City Council, and DPD's Planning Division working together, were co-sponsors of two public forums held in 2003 and are responsible for guiding the development of a new Central Waterfront Plan.*

***Port of Seattle** – The Port's Real Estate Division was a co-sponsor of the two public forums and graciously sponsored the events at an ideally suited location- right on the waterfront.*

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Background & Overview

In early 2003 the City of Seattle's Department of Planning and Development (DPD) initiated a Central Waterfront planning and public involvement process. A major purpose of this effort is to create a long term vision and strategy for the Central Waterfront. The timeline for this planning effort is designed to inform the Alaskan Way Viaduct redevelopment project that is currently underway and to ensure that the City's long term goals for the waterfront are clearly articulated and considered alongside that project.



Throughout the past year, a DPD staff team has worked diligently in researching and documenting all of the past and current policies and studies related to the Central Waterfront. A series of background reports provide an important knowledge base for all of those participating in this planning & design process.

The Seattle Planning Commission (SPC) and Seattle Design Commission (SDC) have participated in several ways in this process. Through a Joint SDC/SPC Waterfront Subcommittee, the two Commissions have offered ongoing advice to the staff team on both the overall process and the content of their work. They also co-sponsored two public forums in 2003 to engage the public in planning for the Central Waterfront's future. These forums were augmented by technical discussion groups with invited experts that focused on five key issue areas held between the first and second forums.

Commission Sponsored Public Forums

The Planning Commission and Design Commission have a long history of sponsoring public workshops and forums and engaging the public in major planning and design processes. Their public involvement work is guided by their strong commitment to bringing ordinary citizens into the planning process and to enriching planning and design with the ideas and suggestions of citizens. The following introductory statement was prepared for the first Kick-off Forum to express this commitment.

Why Public Involvement Matters to Us

Over the years, as the City of Seattle has grown and changed, the Commissions have partnered on a number of public workshops, charrettes, planning or urban design studies, task forces and public forums. We've done so with the belief that public involvement in shaping the City around us truly matters. As the City begins to look anew at the Central Waterfront, we hold to the principles that: cities are vital places; the water's edge is a fragile ecosystem even in an urban setting; people access and use the waterfront in many different ways; planning for the future should be far-sighted; and small ideas can be just as ingenious as big ones. We believe fundamentally in the value of public process, bringing diverse opinions and ideas to the surface, striving for consensus, working in collaboration. It is our hope that you'll join us in the challenge ahead, bring your own unique insights to the table, listen to what is said and what is unsaid, so together we might all discover what we collectively hold dear about life well lived on the waterfront.

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Summary of Public Involvement Events/Activities

Forum #1

Forum #1 was held June 26 and 28, 2003 and was co-sponsored by the Planning Commission and the Design Commission. Its purpose was to generate public interest and encourage participation of individuals, designers, neighborhood groups and businesses in planning for the Central Waterfront.

This first public event focused on informing stakeholders and the general public about current policies



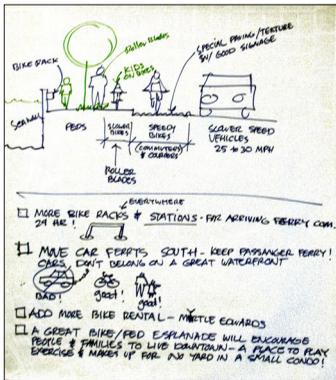
A mapping exercise was used in order to identify areas people like or do not like, and what is missing at the Waterfront.

and planning related to the Central Waterfront and introduced draft planning principles for public review. The event began with remarks from Mayor Nickels and brief overviews of current plans and projects by the Port of Seattle and the City (including the Alaskan Way Viaduct Redevelopment which is being done in partnership with the state), with additional background information provided through displays.

Participants then engaged in an interactive visioning session led by Commissioners which focused on the broad spectrum of people who use the waterfront for different purposes. This exercise resulted in a rich set of ideas about what different users like about the waterfront and what they find to be barriers.

In the Saturday morning session, keynote speaker Michael Sorkin and a panel of experts helped to broaden participants' thinking about the possibilities and the challenges facing the future of Seattle's Central Waterfront.

Approximately 200 participants from all walks of life attended each segment of Forum 1, the Thursday evening reception and interactive session, and the Saturday morning keynote speech and panel discussion.



Some groups made sketches to illustrate their ideas

Discussion Groups

From staff background work and Forum # 1, the City identified five key topical discussion groups – Economic Development, Tourism and Trade; Natural Environment and Ecology; Transportation; Urban Design, Public Space, Historic Preservation, Arts and Culture; and Neighborhood, Community, Housing, Social Services and Stewardship. Discussion groups were made up of key stakeholders and experts, and each held 2 – 3 facilitated discussions during September and October 2003. The purpose of these sessions

was to apply the knowledge and perspective of experts/stakeholders in addressing the opportunities and challenges of each of the topical areas. Lively discussions and many good ideas emerged from these discussion groups.

Center School Participation

As part of their commitment to involving a broad spectrum of the community, three members of the Design Commission and Planning Commission did special outreach to local high schools. This resulted in a focused effort with a class at Center School, a public school operating at Seattle Center. The Commissioners, assisted by UW Architecture students, facilitated several sessions with the class looking at youth as waterfront users. Students from the class presented their results at Forum #2. They will continue to refine their ideas and suggestions for the February 2004 charrette.



Students from Center School report their findings at Forum #2

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Forum #2

The next public forum built on the ideas generated at Forum #1 and in the Discussion groups. It was held November 7, 2003 and was co-sponsored by the Design Commission and Planning Commission. This all-day forum began with summary reports by representatives of the five discussion groups and an update from the Viaduct redevelopment team. Moderator John Howell then facilitated a panel



discussion among these groups and the audience, focusing in part on conflicts and challenges. This helped to surface the key “findings” from each group and to identify areas of conflict among them. Deputy Mayor Tim Ceis offered brief remarks to the group and encouraged people to get active in planning efforts. Over 200 people attended Forum # 2, but they were a surprisingly distinct group it seemed from those who attended Forum 1.

The Commissioners then facilitated an interactive session, bringing together the user groups’ priorities from Forum #1 with the findings and issues from the discussion groups. This lively interactive session helped to synthesize the perspectives of the experts from the discussion groups with those held by the broader set of users of the waterfront, based on results and products from both Forum #1 and the discussion groups. Session participants were divided into five user groups: People at the Margins, People on the Move, Nature Lovers, People out Sightseeing and Young People. Groups identified key priorities for users and potential conflicts and issues. The Commissioner facilitators closed with observations about common themes that emerged across the groups.

Timeline of Waterfront Planning Events

Activity	When	Outcome/ Product
Research	April-June '03	Prelim Background Report Draft Maps
Forum 1	June 26/28 '03	Summary Notes Draft Principles
Discussion Groups	Sept/Oct '03	Discussion Summaries
Center School	Oct/Nov '03	Presentation at Forum 2 Student Video (in process)
Forum 2	Nov 7 '03	Summary Notes Revised Principles/Priorities Enhanced Maps Draft Background Report
Charrette Orientation	Jan 29'04	Updated Draft Principles Final Background Report Preliminary Team Lists Charrette Brief Forums Summary Report
Charrette	Feb 27/28 '04	Vision plans
Charrette Follow Up	Late March early April	Public presentations
Synthesis of Visions	Spring/ Summer '04	Draft Concept Plan

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About this Report

The remainder of this report contains the synthesized results of the interactive sessions of Forums #1 and #2. These results are organized around the key themes that emerged from the sessions.

This report is intended to inform charrette participants, decision makers and the broader public on the critical issues in moving toward a long term vision for the Central Waterfront. An interesting observation is the congruence between these themes and the draft principles that have been developed by City staff, a confirmation of the importance of these basic principles in creating this long term vision and strategy.



We encourage you to use this report in developing creative visions for the waterfront, and in identifying conflicts and trade-offs that must be addressed. It is also an important reminder of the many users of the waterfront and the need to find ways to involve them as we move forward with setting goals and implementing actions for the Central Waterfront Plan.

Themes from the interactive sessions

Environmental Stewardship

Waterfront Authenticity

Variety of Uses and Services

Public Access & Open Space

Transportation Needs

Neighborhood Connections

Waterside of the Waterfront



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Theme: Environmental Stewardship



Objectives and Ideas

- Respect and care for the environmental quality of the waterfront by preserving the uniqueness of our environment
 - Emphasize the potential for aquatic habitat restoration
 - Consider the character of the shoreline
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- Consider the strong value of the interconnection between natural environment and civic life
 - Consider how to create a space in a very urban area to have a place of respite, green area
 - Consider opportunities for youth to experience nature in the city
 - Consider sustainable development in both new & redevelopment and in both the big picture and details
 - Sustain human habitation in a way that we would prefer which include preserving the unique natural environment

- Call for cruise ships as well as other marine users and marine activities to comply with letter and spirit of the law
- Include environmental benefits in evaluation of long-term and short-term costs
- Illustrate potential compelling future scenarios and the benefits they offer and think long-term
- Challenge development paradigm of what a world-class city is to include environmental authenticity and stewardship
- Resolve issues of natural experience versus urban experience while keeping in mind that it is hard to create ‘wild areas’ in urban dense areas
- Resolve issues of use & built environment issues in creating wild spaces

Commission Finding: The Central Waterfront should reflect genuine environmental values and benefits as aquatic habitat, and provide clear economic and cultural assets to Seattle. Improved environmental values will add to the excitement and diversity of the Central Waterfront.

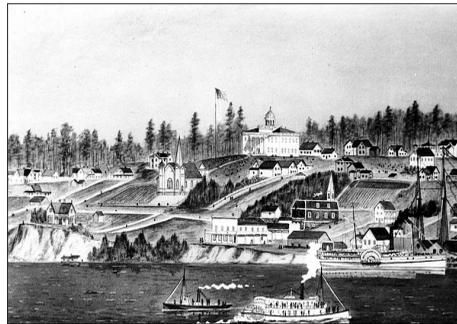


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Theme: Waterfront Authenticity

Objectives and Ideas

- Preserve the authentic nature and character of Seattle's waterfront while balancing waterfront uses that consider residents, workers, tourism and the commercial uses of the place
- Consider how to serve locals and accommodate experiences for our varied weather
- We should understand, not romanticize, the waterfront's history
- Consider a broad definition of authenticity and diversity. The region is free to interpret the history of the waterfront through the artifacts that it thinks are important

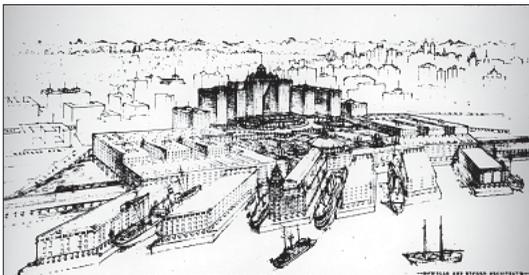


- Waterfront development risks becoming generic and formulaic, consider what we draw from to form an authentic original vision
- Consider that all waterfronts do not need to have an aquarium, fish restaurants and an ornamental trolley



- Consider extending waterfront character to east neighborhoods including connectivity with Pioneer Square, Belltown, Pike Place
- Promote and preserve the uniqueness of our natural environment as a way to preserve the authenticity of the waterfront
- Consider integrating local public art
- Include cultural identifiers

Commission Finding: Maintain authenticity of the waterfront by ensuring that the area is meaningful for residents, tourists, and commercial interests, in the context of Seattle and Elliott Bay.



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Theme: Variety of Uses and Services

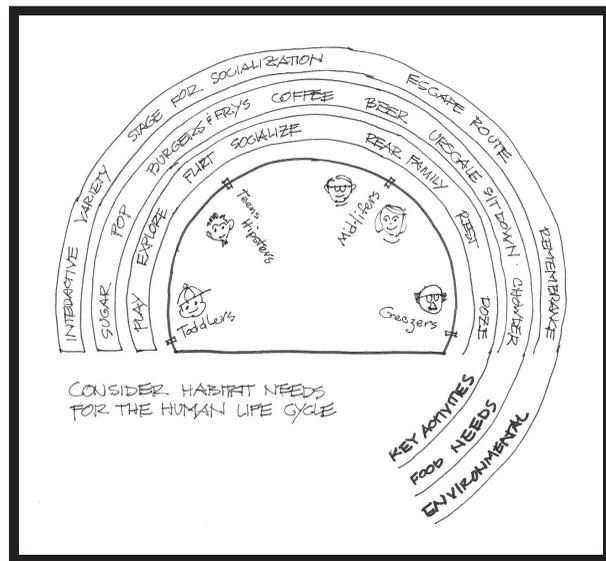
Objectives and Ideas

- Consider the Waterfront a “Place for everybody” where there is room for all
- Consider the waterfront as a gradient not a seam

- Consider the need to create a flexible armature for mixing people and activities

- Consider a 18 – 24 hour days waterfront that is alive and adds a place of vibrancy in the city

- Consider providing 18 hour, low-cost and free activities to ensure an active and safe environment



- Consider creating places of refuge and exploration.
- Consider the waterfront as a civic place for the full spectrum of the community because this will best serve all people

- Resolve the challenge of spaces for habitat versus urban human places by looking at scale. Look at areas of opportunity to create natural open spaces
- Provide services such as comfort stations, restrooms and social services
- Consider sophisticated interaction with social service providers to help address the needs of disenfranchised populations
- Consider a dedicated route to ensure safety for non-auto users
- Consider non-motorized transportation route with historic elements
- Consider dedicated spaces for performance, music and visual art
- Consider all-season activities, a single place or many, like gazebos or greenhouse
- Consider needs and wants of different and diverse age group and provide shared as well as separate spaces
- Resolve differences between occasional and repeat visitors
- Resolve the challenges of the transition in creating 24 hour day in the current regulatory framework
- Resolve the conflict between current property owners and users in zoning and design guidelines



Commission Finding: The Central Waterfront should allow for a mixture of uses with the goal of creating vitality, diversity and balance.

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Theme: Public Access & Open Space

Objectives and Ideas

- Provide both small and large un-programmed open spaces
- Nothing is often a powerful and meaningful form of something
- Consider providing places for people to sit, rest, people watch, and use public restroom facilities
- Provide consistent, quality wayfinding with a creative and local flair such as incorporating historic elements or piers into signage
- Prioritize interaction with water but consider how we design and define “getting to water”
- Communal spaces where people bump into each other are the wetlands for new relationships
- Provide direct access for pedestrians to the water surface such as steps to the water, floating facilities and seawall



- View water as the main attraction and unifying theme
- Consider water as open space
- Prioritize views
- Be creative in providing open spaces such as rooftop gardens, kids' play areas, floating facilities, opening street ends to water
- Consider uses of the pier buildings for greater public access
- Consider replacement and reopening Washington St Pier

**“Create spaces that
dance not just
with people, but
with light and
water.”**

*Michael Sorkin, Architect,
Planner & Keynote Speaker
Waterfront Forum # 1*



- Consider reopening Jack Perry Memorial Park as a place for open space and public access
- Resolve noise issues and minimize the noise barrier
- Better east - west connections should include attention to aesthetics

Commission Finding: The Central Waterfront has the potential for quality open space and for providing public access for local residents as well as visitors.

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Theme: Transportation Needs

Objectives and Ideas

- The waterfront is a civic place and should be accessible by a range of transportation modes

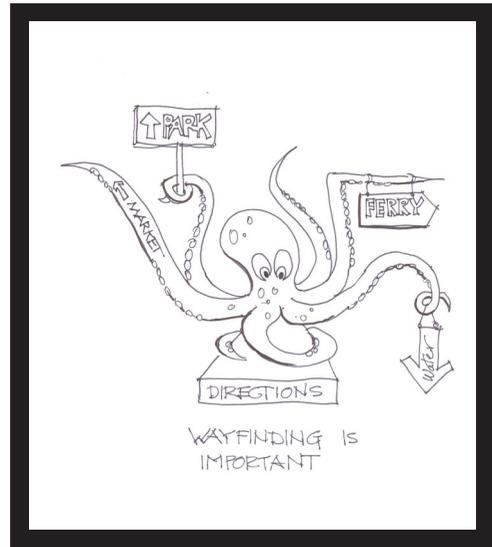


- Creatively resolve the challenge of 'transportation through' versus 'access to' the waterfront
- Trains and cars were not designed to respond to cities; cities have had to adapt to accommodate them. The type of transportation you provide depends on the type of city you want to create
- Resolve transportation conflict between vehicles, pedestrians, trains, streetcar, buggies and bikes
- Transportation must be sustainable, safe, and democratic
- Reduce vehicular access on the waterfront in order to minimize motorized traffic on the surface to benefit everyone





- Consider the grade separation of trains, autos and vehicles
 - Change transit routes to better coordinate with ferry schedules to provide consistency and predictability for auto and pedestrian ferry users
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- Provide a separate and continuous non-motorized waterfront way with interpretive elements including both icons and as part of the design (might include cultural walk, ecologic elements and sculpture)
 - Provide excellent wayfinding to both downtown and neighborhood destinations and integrate new wayfinding into existing
 - Resolve east-west conflicts and challenges of connecting to surrounding neighborhoods
 - Streetcar service should be broadened as a real transit option by affording adequate right of way, fare integration, better route information, extending line to Seattle Center transit stations and better connections to transportation hubs



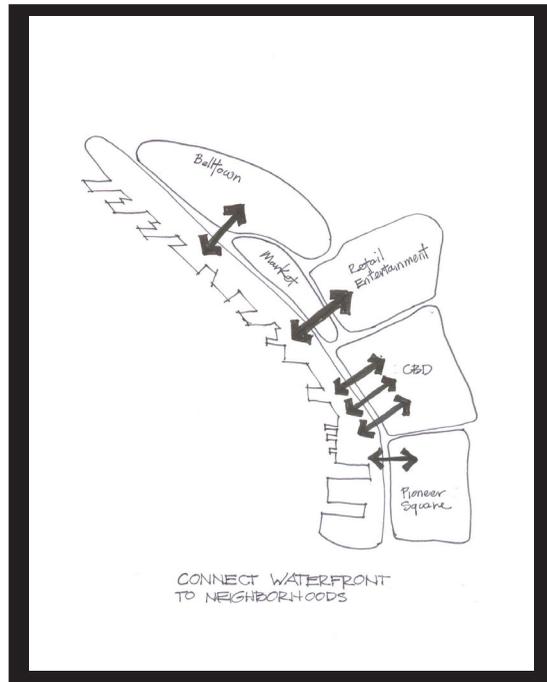
Commission Finding: Good transportation is integral to the Central Waterfront. It must serve a variety of functions and must be consistent with the broader context and functions of the waterfront environment.

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Theme: Neighborhood Connections

Objectives and Ideas

- Connections to nearby neighborhoods to the east are essential
- Consider the provision of frequent, safer, more pleasant and convenient pedestrian and transit access between the waterfront and surrounding neighborhoods
- Augment adjacency to neighborhoods
- Design should build on adjacent neighborhoods
- Resolve connectivity challenges to Belltown which offers residential, nightlife, and restaurants



- Enhance the pedestrian experience and use Green Streets
- Improve directions to hill climb assistance and signage to neighborhoods and other nearby landmarks like Pike Place Market, Pioneer Square and the stadiums.
- Improve scary dark areas under the viaduct
- Landscaping and grade separation can be used to help improve the waterfronts connectivity to neighborhoods
- Bike lanes should better assist east- west connections
- The use of a water taxi and waterside transit will enhance connectivity of places along the water and nearby communities such as Alki and Myrtle Edwards

Commission Finding: Improved connections between the Central Waterfront and downtown neighborhoods will greatly benefit the livability of those dense, urban residential areas and enrich the diversity of users of the waterfront.



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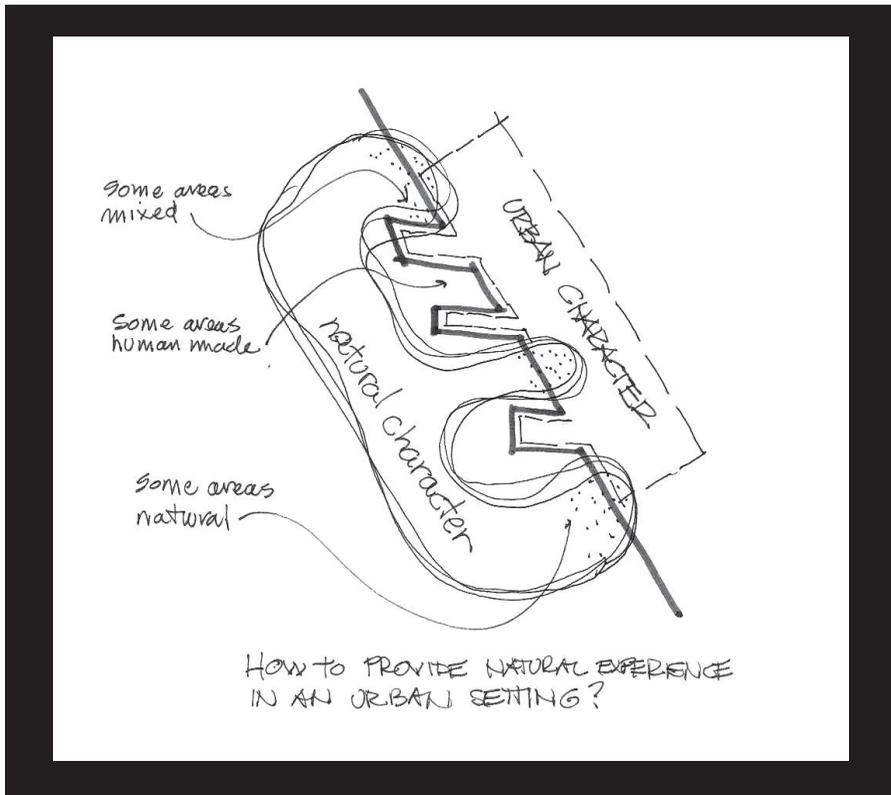
Theme: Waterside of the Waterfront



Objectives and Ideas

- Consider ways to create a sustainable future that seeks diverse uses that specifically balance water dependent uses versus over-water coverage
 - Consider changes to the character of the shoreline that emphasize the potential for aquatic habitat restoration
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- Non-motorized water vehicles should be able to safely share the waterways
 - New additions to the area should refine the predominance of water at the waterfront
 - Buildings need to distort themselves to invite and accommodate the landscape and waterscape
 - Consider the use of historic ecological interpretive signage along the waterfront

- Provide broadly distributed access to water activities, experiences, interaction that are clean and low impact to the water habitat
- Consider places to touch, experience & explore the water, nature, urban wild spaces, green spaces, saltwater pools, and beaches
- Resolve physical challenges of getting to and touching the water. Need to consider the current uses and environmental regulations and mitigation



Commission Finding: The Central Waterfront’s “water side” should be as evident as its “land side” in its physical, cultural and economic functions.



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CONCLUSION

The Design Commission and Planning Commission will continue to actively advise the City on the development of the Central Waterfront Plan. From their involvement with early public process efforts related to the Plan, and most specifically the two Forums, they offer the following synopsis of their Findings, Observations and Recommendations.

Findings from the Forum Interactive Sessions

7 themes emerged from the group exercises conducted at both Forums about imagined User Group experiences of the waterfront.

- The Central Waterfront should reflect genuine environmental values and benefits, such as aquatic habitat, as well as providing clear economic and cultural assets to Seattle. Improved environmental values will add to the excitement and diversity of the waterfront.
- Maintain authenticity of the waterfront by ensuring that the area is meaningful for residents, tourists, and commercial interests, in the context of Seattle and Elliott Bay.
- The Central Waterfront should provide for a mixture of uses with the goal of creating vitality, diversity and balance.

- The Central Waterfront has the potential to be a place for quality open space and for providing public access for local residents as well as visitors.
- Good transportation is integral to the Central Waterfront. It must serve a variety of functions and must be consistent with the broader context and functions of the waterfront environment.
- Improved connections between the Central Waterfront and downtown neighborhoods will greatly benefit the livability of those dense, urban residential areas and enrich the diversity of users of the waterfront.
- The Central Waterfront's "water side" should be as evident as its "land side" in its physical, cultural and economic functions.

Observations from the Public Forums

- Forum participants shared many common goals and perceptions about the Central Waterfront; the similarities among various user groups were greater than their differences.
- Potential conflicts among goals and visions do exist and will require careful consideration in the future planning process. These conflicts will likely require choices about the mix of uses that can successfully co-exist and the overall character that can be achieved. Examples include transportation "to" versus transportation "through", preserving the natural environment and habitat ecology versus creating a dense, urban environment; and preserving the authentic (historic) uses versus bringing in new economic activities. The challenge lies in finding the balance in an inspiring concept plan.
- The forums, including the interactive sessions, have reinforced the Draft Principles crafted by City staff. These provide a good foundation for future planning and policy decisions.



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Joint Commission Recommendations To the City on Next Steps

- Conduct the charrette to generate good, creative ideas - from active participants and drop in visitors, as well.
- Use this report to inform charrette participants, those drafting the concept plan, elected officials, and other decision-makers.
- Reinforce the outcome of the charrette and resulting concept plan with revisions to City policies, as needed.
- Test the *Themes* that emerged in the Forum interactive sessions with the real user groups following the charrette.
- Continue to include citizens and the Design and Planning Commissions in this planning effort. There are no experts about the future, just our best guesses and concerted thinking about the possibilities. Our visioning, planning and urban design process should be democratic and transparent.
- Secure funds to implement the plan will be key to enable swift follow through.

PROJECT MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

Agendas and Summary Notes for Forum 1 & 2 are available at the following website:

<http://www.seattle.gov/DPD/CentralWaterfront>

Additional materials related to the project that will serve as key resources to Charrette participants are also posted on this website.

These include:

- Updated Draft Principles
- Final Background Report
- Charrette Brief

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